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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT CHEN'S COMMENTS ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, NEW JAPANESE PRIME MINISTER ABE

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies gave significant coverage September 29 to New York Yankees pitcher Chien-ming Wang who broke the Major League "Asian" record by with his 19th win in New York's Yankee Stadium Thursday. News coverage also focused on the twentieth anniversary of the DPP's founding; on the follow-on movements of former DPP Chairman Shih Ming-teh's campaign to oust President Chen Shui-bian; and on a fugitive arms broker indicted for his alleged role in a kickback scandal in the purchase of Lafayette-class frigates from France. The pro-unification "United Daily News" ran a banner headline on page three that read "Bian: Taiwan, China Are Two Completely Different Countries." In addition, both the "United Daily News" and pro-status quo "China Times" on inside pages carried remarks by an unnamed senior U.S. official who was quoted as saying that President Chen knows where the red line lies, so the Bian Administration had better not play the game of "lawyer's language."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's largest-circulation daily, said it requires wisdom and efforts to handle Taiwan's territorial issue through constitutional reforms. The "Black and White" column in the "United Daily News" criticized President Chen's recent constitutional reform proposal, saying that Chen has maxed out all his credibility with regard to Taiwan's relations with the United States. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News," on the other hand, discussed Japan's new Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, saying Abe is sure to play a role in the Taiwan Strait. End summary.

¶3. President Chen's Comments on Constitutional Reform

A) "It Requires Wisdom and Effort to Handle the Territorial Issue via Constitutional Reform"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (9/29):

"... What President Chen and the DPP have been generally criticized for over the past few years is that they have not tried their best to push the engineering that would make Taiwan a normal country, such as the rectification of Taiwan's name and the writing of a new constitution. They have claimed that 'There is just no way we can do it,' a statement that has greatly disappointed those who are concerned about Taiwan's future. But whenever there are elections or when they are facing a difficult situation, Chen and the DPP become radical and consequently trigger warnings from the United States and China about not crossing the red line, a development that helps nothing but creates trouble for the engineering of Taiwan to be a normal country.

"The constitutional reform issue brought up by President Chen on

territorial definition is a topic none of the 23 million Taiwan people can avoid. But we are aware that, given the current reality, the chances are slim for the proposal to be passed. Nonetheless, we will never accomplish our goal if we never try. Since Chen is determined to do so, he should get rid of the myth that westbound [i.e., China-bound] policies will increase the island's competitiveness, strengthen the Taiwan-centered awareness through education, resolve ethnic conflicts and concentrate the people's attention on national identity. In the meantime, we should explain [our position] in detail to the international community to seek international support and smoothly accomplish Taiwan's goal of becoming a normal country."

#### B) "Bian Alone Has Maxed out Taiwan Independence"

The "Black and White" column in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] commented (9/29):

"Chen Shui-bian was again attempting to use remarks about 'Taiwan's new constitution' to fool the pro-independence activists. But his remarks regarding territorial redefinition immediately drew a serious reaction from the U.S. State Department, which, in return, demanded Bian fulfill the 'pledge he himself has repeatedly made' and not let Taiwan's 'constitutional reforms touch on territorial definition.' The strict attitude of the United States indicated that Washington is at the end of its patience with Bian. ...

"Given Washington's profound understanding of Taiwan's political situation, how can it not know that Bian's remarks in effect rewriting the constitution were nothing but a political show [for domestic consumption] on the island? But the United States insisted on sticking to Bian's pledge of not altering the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, adding a statement saying whether Bian is able to fulfill his promise is closely related to 'whether he is capable of leading and protecting Taiwan's interests.' The United States is obviously telling Bian: If you violate your promise, you don't have the capability to protect Taiwan's interests, and you have lost the

legitimacy to lead Taiwan; in other words, you should step down!

"Bian just briefly mentioned 'giving consideration to' territorial change, yet the United States gave such a severe warning. [Washington's reaction] indicated that Bian has indeed maxed out his credibility with regard to Taiwan's relations with the United States, and Washington decided not to leave him any leeway. The resources for Taiwan independence that have been accumulated for so many years have been maxed out by Chen alone, otherwise the Bush Administration, which has more or less listened to and understood the Taiwan independence discourse, would not be lecturing Bian so harshly on his political show to the independence activists!"

#### 14. New Japanese Prime Minister Abe

##### "Abe Will Ensure Role in Taiwan Strait"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (9/29):

"... The common foundations of similar values of democracy and freedom, combined with greater concern over China's increasingly assertive military and diplomatic position, have helped spur a perceptible enhancement of relations between Japan and Taiwan during the past five years. The inclusion of several members of the Diet's Japan-Taiwan club in the new cabinet naturally indicates that the trend toward deepening Taipei-Tokyo ties is bound to continue under Abe. ... Finally, in considering the Taiwan Strait's dispute, we must understand that the traditional 'U.S., China and Taiwan triangle' cannot cope with the current strategic situation in the Taiwan Strait.

"Thanks to its own diplomatic efforts and the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance, Japan will inevitably play a role which cannot be ignored in future developments in the Taiwan Strait. If Taiwan remains so obsessed with the fear of offending Beijing and it is willing to sacrifice relations with the U.S. and Japan and put all of the hopes for Taiwan's economic prosperity and security on China, as Ma has hinted the KMT is willing to do, the result may well be a huge strategic disaster for the Taiwan people and for Tokyo and

Washington. Certainly, Abe is unlikely to be eager to see such a denouement.

WANG